ELECTIONS IN ENGLAND

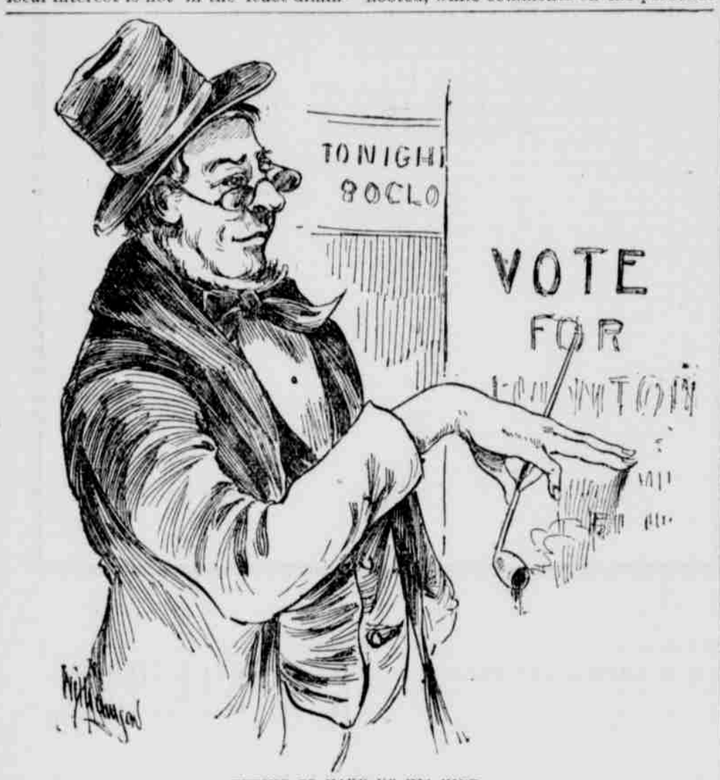
MISERIES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE.

Humors of a British Political Meeting—Visiting the Candidate—Evading Troublesome Inquiries—Who May Vote for a Candidate for the Commons.

A Parliamentary Election.

The imperviousness of the average British skull to a joke prevents a general and thorough appreciation of the humors of a British election. The English have a faculty of taking everything with the utmost seriousness, and as an election is, to them, the most important affair in which the British can engage, every step in its progress, from the dissolution of the old Parliament to the assembling of the new, is taken with overpowering solemnity that is often very funny. According to the Globe-Democrat, every one who has anything to do with the affair, no matter how small and insignificant his share may be, is profoundly impressed with a sense of his own importance and of the fact that he is making history, and so goes about the job with an earnestness that does him much credit, but often fails to impress the bystanders in the manner intended. From the candidate himself to the Chairman of a popular meeting, and from the latter pompous functionary to the humble sharer in political work who walks up and down the streets bearing two boards on which is inscribed advice to voters as to the proper person to receive their encouragement and votes, every one feels, or seems to feels, that he is a part of one stupendous whole, and conducts himself accordingly.

The infrequency of parliamentary elections in Great Britain, as compared with those for Congress in this country, has a tendency to increase their importance in the eyes of the people, and the local interest is not in the least diminished by the fact that, as a general thing, up to a short time before the election few of the electors in many of the boroughs know for whom they will be called on to cast their votes, for the leaders of the two parties choose the candidates and assign them to districts, so that a Scotchman may be called on to contest a borough in the south of England, while an Englishman goes to Scotland to solicit the favor of the people there. The fact that they frequently have never seen their candidate until he appears before them on the hustings does not disturb the determination of the men of his party to vote for him, and when he "comes down" from London—for in England London is "up," and everywhere else is "down"—to address them, they turn out with an enthusiasm born of a zeal for the party to give him a welcome.

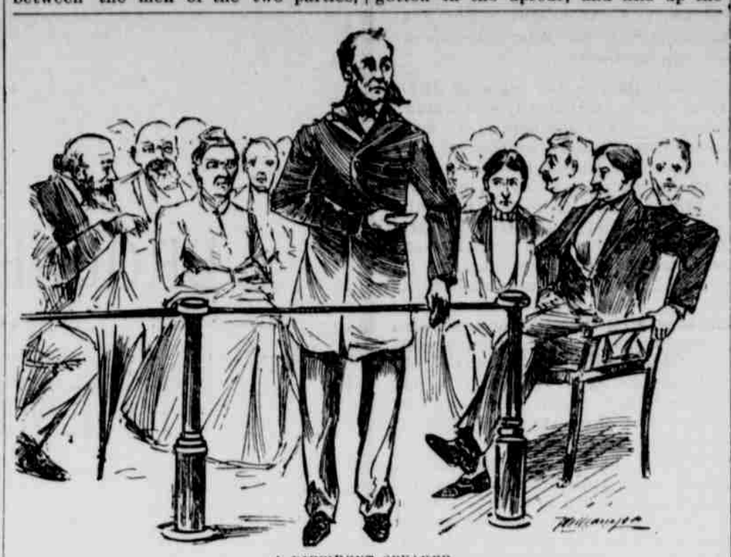


TRYING TO MAKE UP HIS MIND.

Suppose, then, that the Liberals propose to contest a seat in Kent and the Liberal management sends down John Smith to make the canvass. John goes down, visits Cranbrook, Biddenden, Harsmonden, Goudhurst and other villages in his district, shakes hands with the men, asks about the health of their "missuses" and the children, and goes through other processes of an electoral canvass as familiar to voters in this country as in England. But John's canvass is not to be completed without making a public appearance of some kind, for much as the English people ridicule the American love of speech-making, the desire to address audiences is at least as strong in every part of England as in any part of America. Long before the coming of the would-be M. P. a meeting has been arranged, and at this gathering Mr. Smith is expected to outline the policy of his party, to show how it alone is the salvation of the country, to explain what it has done in the past and what it proposes to do in the future, and to prove, to the satisfaction of all the Liberals in hearing, that the Tories are dragging the nation to swift and certain destruction.

WINNING THE BUTCHER'S VOTE.

For a day or two before small boys have distributed handbills through the town and vicinity inviting the voters to turn out in force to the meeting in, for instance, the vestry hall of Cranbrook. The hall, which is a place of public assembly, will seat 300 or 400 people, and on the evening of the meeting is packed to suffocation with voters anxious to hear what Mr. Smith has to say. Liberals are there, of course, in great numbers, but among them is a liberal sprinkling of Tory adherents, who have come to have a little fun and to make things interesting for Mr. Smith and his supporters. Long before meeting is called to order a war of words has been begun between the men of the two parties,



A DIFFIDENT SPEAKER.

and they quarrel in pairs over the issues of the canvass, each making the matter entirely personal to himself and opponent. The entry of the Chairman and local committee ushering in John Smith is the signal for prolonged uproar. The Chairman and local committee are jeered at by their acquaintances of the opposite political faith in the crowd, the candidate is cheered and hooted, while comments on his personal appearance are often too pointed to be agreeable. The Chairman finally succeeds in bringing the meeting to some show of order and introduces John Smith, who, with desperation in his heart, begins the task of running the gauntlet of a fire of questions and interruptions from the mob. Unless the meeting has been packed there are always sturdy opponents present to ask inopportune questions, and these self-appointed cross-examiners do their work well, frequently driving a candidate almost wild with their troublesome queries. Nor are they to be put down or overawed. They have generally prepared themselves beforehand with a list of questions, and refer to their memoranda from time to time so as to omit none of the list. The most troublesome of their number are men who have a pet idea which does not fall in with the policy of the candidate. If the idea is popular, they always have the sympathy of a portion at least of the audience, and frequently carry on a sort of opposition meeting in the same room and at the same time as that of their opponents.

After the row between the two factions has progressed to a point where altercation is evidently about to be succeeded by fisticuffs, a compromise is generally effected, the most pertinacious and troublesome of the opponents is invited to a seat on the platform, to become a part of the meeting, and is then expected to hold his peace until given a chance to speak his mind. The compromise is generally respected so far as he is concerned, but his followers do not in any wise consider themselves restrained by the courtesy shown their leader, but resort to every possible means to interrupt and embarrass the speakers. They shout, they groan, they yell, they whistle, they call out, "'Ear! 'ear!" in the most ironically annoying way. They bring to their assistance various instruments of music, tuneful and otherwise, on which they execute fantasias of the most ear-splitting description; they crow like cocks, they bellow like cows, they bray like donkeys. Poor John Smith, who time with such remarks as occur to him on the spur of the moment or are suggested by the more or less impertinent questions of the mob.

Tired out by his efforts he finally takes his seat, and is vigorously applauded by his female relatives on the platform, who have listened to his address with looks of admiration at the profundity of his wisdom, and with reproachful and contemptuous glances at the crowd which did not appreciate such talent.

The close of John's speech is the signal for an outbreak compared to which the uproar that prevailed all along was a trifle. Some of the audience desire to hear other speakers of the same party as the candidate, others wish to have a taste of something different, and the leader of the opposition, who was invited on the platform in order to keep him quiet, usually seizes the opportunity of the lull to spring to his feet and begin an answer to the statements and arguments that have been advanced by the candidate. He is often successful, for the spirit of fair play is strong among the English people, but not infrequently, when the local committee deems the situation inopportune, he is, on one excuse or other, suppressed whereupon he retires in high dudgeon from the platform and gives utterance to his dissatisfaction from a chair in the back part of the room.

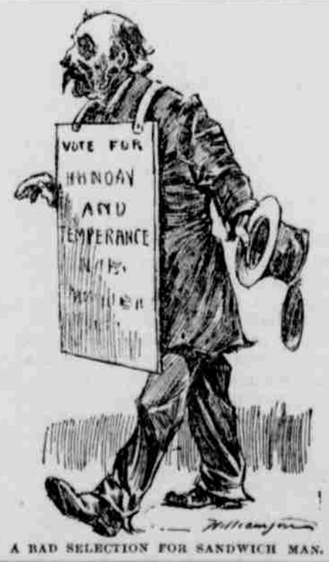
A few days later the Tories have their meeting in the same room, and are addressed by their candidate, the same scenes being enacted, this time, however, the Liberals appearing as the disturbing element, and, in all probability a member of the Liberal local committee appearing in the role of chief grumbler, and being invited to a seat on the platform to secure a temporary respite while the Tory candidate airs his views.

Disorderly as they often are, however, the political meetings of the present day are a marked improvement over those described by Dickens half a century ago, when the nominating meetings were often riotous. No one who has read the great novelist's picture of the election in which Mr. Pickwick and his friends bore an humble part can ever forget the description; and yet, from the evidence given by less imaginative writers, there is reason to believe the sketch is little, if at all, overdrawn.

The methods of canvassing after the nominations have been made have, however, undergone little change. The

THE CANDIDATE'S FAMILY.

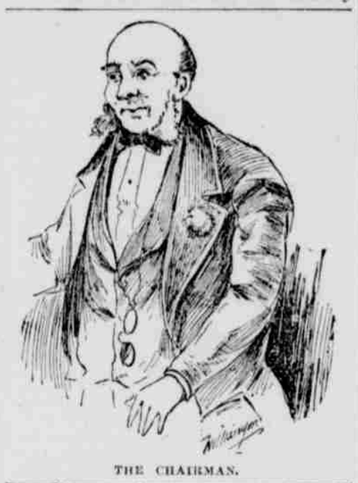
number of voters, though largely increased during the last fifty years, is still restricted as compared with the system of universal suffrage of the United States, and the efforts to obtain votes are proportionately more energetic. The hand-shaking goes on with



A BAD SELECTION FOR SANDWICH MAN.

vigor from the nomination until polling is ended, and many a fine lady, eager for the success of her favorite candidate, condescends to solicit in person the favor of men on whom at other times she would not deign to bestow a glance. In a close election the canvassing is carried on with a vigor of which the people of this country know nothing, for in a district where the antecedents of every man for generations are perfectly well known to all, the only hope of success lies in inducing voters of the opposite political faith to change their minds; and the difficulty of doing this can be imagined only when the rugged self-reliance, not to say obstinacy, of the British voter is taken into consideration. The time was when votes were sold and bought almost openly, but that time has gone by; if there is bribery now it is so carefully hidden as to be invisible even to the shrewd guardians of public order.

But the voters are not the only persons subjected to moral pressure while the canvass is in progress. In every British community, as in every part of the United States, there are men and women who imagine that the world is on their shoulders, and that, should they remove their support, the moral universe would totter and fall. These are the men and women who form societies for the purpose of bringing about what the rest of the world calls impossibilities. Sometimes they succeed, sometimes they fail; in the former case they are placed on the pedestal of fame as benefactors, leaders of the world's thought, and persons to whom after ages will point with pride; in the latter, they are denominated cranks, and are pronounced fit for the lunatic asylum. Whether cranky or philanthropic, however, they are equally troublesome to an anxious candidate when they come to demand what policy he intends to pursue in regard to the idea they have made it their business to foster, and the unfortunate man is often put to not a little uneasiness when a woman's-rights delegation or a temperance committee calls upon him to express himself explicitly in regard to these questions. To oppose them is to lose the support of all on their side; to favor them is to suffer a certain loss, probably much greater, among those who regard their pet theories as folly; to be noncommittal is to run the possibility of loss in both directions. To steer clear of these difficulties is no easy matter, particularly as the people who constitute themselves a committee to elicit the candidate's views are not usually



THE CHAIRMAN.

disposed to tolerate evasion, but demand an unequivocal statement; and the example of the candidate in the last Parliamentary election, who, whenever informed that a delegation was on its way to his house, hid in the garret, leaving word that he gone to London, would be followed by more than one unhappy contestant, did he not fear the consequences of such evasion even more than the results of an interview.

But from one kind of pressure, that for appointment to office, the candidate for Parliament is almost entirely free. There are, to be sure, in Great Britain as in the United States, numerous patriots who are willing to serve their country at a fixed and liberal salary, but the incoming of a new administration with a new policy does not mean there, as here, a general exodus of Government officials. Civil service has, in Great Britain, passed beyond the experimental stage, and is as firmly grounded as any other principle of administrative government. With the defeat of the administration, the ministry and a few heads of departments go out, but the great body of English public servants, after being appointed, are secure in their places no matter how great the political unheavals that from time to time take place in the nation. Prime ministers may come and go, but the clerk in a government department, the country postmaster, stays on, unaffected by the change in domestic or foreign policy that may be involved in the election.

Mention has already been made of the comparatively restricted number of English voters by whom the candidate for Parliament is confirmed in his election. Small as are these numbers compared with our unlimited suffrage, they are large when compared with the classes of voters who exercised the franchise before the reform bill of 1868, which was passed by the Conservative Government of Disraeli. Under this document voters in counties comprised 40 shilling freeholders, or those owning property in fee of that annual value, those possessing a life estate of the annual value of 40 shillings, which, if not occupied, must have been possessed before 1832, those possessing a life estate of the annual value of £5, lessees for not less than sixty years of the annual value of £5, or for twenty years of the annual value of £50, and occupiers of lands rated at £12 a year. In boroughs the voters comprise the rated occupiers of dwellings who have paid their poor rates, occupiers of premises, not dwelling houses, of the annual value of £10, and lodgers occupying premises of the annual value of £10. The bars of suffrage were thus let down to a very low notch, but in spite of this fact great numbers of the Queen's subjects are still disfranchised, and have neither part nor lot in the election of their representatives in Parliament.

THE new Kansas State-house, on which over $2,000,000 has been expended, and which is not yet completed, is said to be in danger of falling down, owing to poor material used. The large stones at the base of the dome are splitting and crumbling, and the entire structure is endangered. The Legislature, through State pride, required Kansas stone to be used, and the result is a defective building. State pride should be tempered with common sense.

THE American gooseberries require prunnig every year.

Rousing Sleepers.

In the olden time church services were so long—prayers, hymns, and sermons—that it is no wonder that many of the hard-worked people in the congregations could not keep awake. Both in the old world and in the new various devices were resorted to for the purpose of banishing sleep from the church. Among these was not the modern one of making the services short and interesting. Our English fathers tried several methods of breaking up the offensive practice. One method was that known as "bobbing," a term thus explained by a writer in Notes and Queries:

"My mother can remember Betty Finch, a very masculine sort of woman, being the 'bobber' at Holy Trinity Church in the year 1810. She walked very majestically along the aisles during divine service, armed with a great long stick like a fishing-rod, which had a bob fastened to the end of it; and when she caught any sleeping or talking, they got a 'nudge.'"

Doctor Thirlwall, Bishop of St. David's, gives in one of his "Letters" an amusing account of a Kerry custom for awakening sleepers in church.

"It is by ancient custom a part of the sexton's duty to perambulate the church during service time with a bell in his hand, to look carefully into every pew, and whenever he finds any one dozing to ring the bell.

"He discharges this duty, it is said, with great vigilance, intrepidity and impartiality, and consequently with the happiest effect on the congregation; for as everybody is certain that if he or she gives way to drowsiness the fact will be forthwith made known through the church by a peal which will direct all eyes to the sleeper, the fear of such a visitation is almost always sufficient to keep every one on the alert."

Rent on Paying His Fare.

He sat in a Sixth avenue elevated railroad car, and twirled a 5-cent piece expectantly. At length he turned to a New York Tribune reporter, who happened to be sitting near him, and said: "What's the fare on this road?" "Five cents." "Don't they collect it?" "Certainly not. You buy a ticket at the station where you get on and put it in the box on the platform." "That's strange," said the man with the unused nickel. "Somehow I've slipped in without paying. You see," he added confidentially, "I'm from California, and we don't ride around in this sort of thing out there. Guess I can put in a ticket when I get off, can't I?" "Well," said the reporter, "the elevated road crowds and hustles us so that some New-Yorkers wouldn't hesitate to 'beat' the road if it were in such an unintentional manner as you have done it." "I think I had better pay," said the Californian decidedly. And at Fourteenth street he left the train and said to the ticket chopper: "Somehow or other I have ridden up here from Chambers street without paying anything. "Saved a nickel, did yer?" "I want to pay now." "Hey?" "I say I want to pay for my ride." "Don't live in New York, do you?" "No." "Didn't come from Jersey or Brooklyn, did yer?" "No." "Where did you come from?" "California." "Convention?" "Yes." "Well, you go round to that window," gasped the chopper, "plank down five cents for a ticket, and come back and put it in this box. Then let me look at yer. I've chopped tickets goin' on three years, but I never seed a man like you before."

The Oldest Language.

Probably the oldest known specimens of recorded language in the world to-day are the inscriptions on the door-sockets and brick stamps found at Niffer by the Babylonian exploration expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, which has recently returned. The brick stamps, which are of yellow clay, about four by five inches and an inch in thickness, bear the name and titles of King Sargon and his son Narim-Sin, who lived about 3800 B. C., and they were taken from the mound which covers the site of ancient Nippuru, with its famous temple of Baal. The expedition also found many other objects of interest, such as clay tablets containing contracts, lists of goods, temple incomes, art fragments, and images sold by the temple fakirs. These throw much light on the history of the people as opposed to that of the kings, and the work of the expedition carries Babylonian records back one thousand years, to a time of which practically nothing has hitherto been known. The antiquities found are now in the university museum.

A Peculiar Custom.

"There is one very peculiar thing about the laws of the Isle of Man," says a writer in the Louisville Courier-Journal. "It is the only country in the world, so far as I know, except Iceland, which clings to the ancient customs of hundreds of years ago, of promulgating them from the top of the Thingwald hill, a mountain in the very center of the island. They must be read to the whole people from the Thingwald mountain, on the 5th day of July, before they are binding. Of course, there are some special occasions, but the 5th day of July is the lawful day, and on this occasion, each year, 15,000 or 20,000 people assemble to hear the news read. This is something that is not generally known, I think, and is peculiar to the Isle of Man. The laws must be read in both the Manx and the English languages."

IT is pretty certain that Corot, the French artist, did not paint more than 700 sketches, and yet there have been 12,000 examples of his work palmed upon a picture-buying public, which has only just begun to learn that auction-catalogued pictures are not always what they pretend to be.

HUMOR OF THE WEEK.

STORIES TOLD BY FUNNY MEN OF THE PRESS.

Many Odd, Curious, and Laughable Phases of Human Nature Graphically Portrayed by Eminent Word Artists of Our Own Day.

Scissored Smiles.

HE—"No one can understand 'what the wild waves are saying.'" She—"Of course not. The ocean is so very deep."—New York Herald.

FIRST MAMMA—"I see you have got your boys some pretty suits." Second Mamma—"Yes, that's the only way I can keep them in check."—Texas Siftings.

A WEST PHILADELPHIA maiden is mourning the loss of her fine poll parrot. She attempted to force it to sing "Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay."—Philadelphia Record.

THE pen is mightier than the sword: and does a good deal more cutting, too.

THERE is a family of the name of Pancake in Dade County, Mo. What's the batter with that name, anyhow?—Kansas City Journal.

A KANSAS newspaper man wrote a communication to a rival editor calling him an ass, and then signed it, "Yours fraternally."—Texas Siftings.

"THEY say McGinnis made a very effective speech at the political meeting last night." "Effective? You bet! 'Barkeep,' he said, 'charge the whole bill to me,'"—Chicago Tribune.

MRS. GADDER—Have you seen Mrs. Hemphill since her husband eloped with the cook? Mrs. De Gush—Yes. She doesn't care: she was going to give the cook notice, anyway.—Brooklyn Life.

DELICATE TO a FAULT.—Mrs. Slimson—My Clara is an awfully delicate girl; she can't stand anything. Mrs. Von Blumer—Neither can my Maude. She put on a sailor hat the other day, and it made her seasick.—Cloak Review.

"HOW DO you like your new flannel shirts, Wiggins?" "Oh, they're great! Had 'em washed a couple of times, and now I'm keeping them to wear for wristbands in the winter."—Chicago News.

"'RASTUS kissed me on bofe lips larst night," said Dinah. "Gwuffum hyah! Not bofe at once, chile?"—Judge.

"PAPA, I guess there isn't any plumbers in heaven," said a 6-year-old youngster one rainy day. "Why not, my son?" "Because the sky seems to leak so easy."—Texas Siftings.

STRANGER—"What do you have the wires on that barbed-wire fence so close together for?" Missouri Farmer—"So that when the river rises we can use it for a fish-net."—Judge.

LONG—"I know an artist who painted a runaway horse. It was so natural that the beholders jumped out of the way." Downing—"Humph! My friend McGilp painted a portrait of a lady that was so natural that he had to sue her for his bill."—Life's Calendar.

MRS. B.—Have you any near relatives, Norah? Norah—Only an aunt, mum; an' she isn't what you might call near, for it's in New Orleans she lives, mum.—Brooklyn Life.

THE WESTERN BAD MAN.—Arizona Abe—Didn't yeh shoot him when he insulted yeh? Howling Hank—Naw. Thar wus nuthin' around that I could shoot from behind.—New York Herald.

"DON'T yez be toird av that policeman yet?" said the up-stairs girl to the cook. "Yis. But Oi can't have any other company." "Why?" "Because Michael says that if Oi do he'll arrest 'im fur contimpt of coort."—Washington Star.

BOGGS—Funny how the papers are all the time talking about the plant of an iron mill: next thing they'll be telling us that this strange plant produces flowers. Joggs—They do already; you may read every day about the output of steel blooms.

IT is altogether useless to try to talk politics to the man who was married only a week ago.—Somerville Journal.

JACK TAR—We ain't so very fur from land, Jim. There has been a yacht along here lately. Jim—How do you know? Jack Tar—See all them champagne corks.—Grip.

WAITER (seeing dissatisfaction on guest's face)—Wasn't that fowl cooked to suit you, sir? Guest—Yes, all but the bill; just take that back and tell them to boil it down a little.—Harper's Weekly.

HOW IT does recall old times to see your boy come home with another boy's shirt on and his back sunburned from his hair to his heels! It makes a fellow want to be a boy and go swimming again himself.—Bradford Era.

A YOUNG man, his eye blackened, his collar and necktie disordered, his coat torn, his hair tossing wildly and wearing no hat, was rushing along one of the streets of the Back Bay when he encountered his best girl. "Oh, Henry!" she exclaimed, in an agony of distress, "I know it all! You have seen father."—Boston Post.

"GEORGE WASHINGTON must have been a mere boy when he was inaugurated President," said Mrs. Wilkins. "I saw an engraving of the scene the other day, and Washington was in short trousers."—Harper's Bazar.

MRS. VAN CRUGER—"It strikes me, my dear, that flirting has become almost a science. It reminds me of chess." Edith Theodora—"Yes, mamma, that's so. You can't get along without the men, you know."—Boston Budget.